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Thomas F. Barry, Jr., P.E.
Secretary

DIRECTIVE EXPIRES: ~~January 3, 2002~~
July 3, 2002

MEDIAN OPENING AND ACCESS MANAGEMENT DECISION PROCESS

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this section is to provide direction for engineering decisions to support deviation from median opening standards stated in ***Administrative Rule 14-97.003(1) Figure 2, F.A.C.*** This procedure will also provide direction for handling driveway decisions that cannot be handled at the project or staff level. This procedure will help ensure consistent application of established access management engineering practice statewide throughout the Florida Department of Transportation Districts.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Mr. Gary Sokolow, (850) 414-4912, Suncom 994-4912, Florida Department of Transportation, Systems Planning Office, 605 Suwannee Street, Mail Station 19, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0450. Internet E-mail: gary.sokolow@dot.state.fl.us (Internal FDOT E-mail PL931GS). If phone number has changed, call Office of Organization and Procedures for the appropriate contact (850) 414-4450 or Suncom 994-4450.

AUTHORITY:

Section 335.18, Florida Statutes, State Highway System Access Management Act
Sections 338.001; 334.03, 334.044, 335.02, Florida Statutes (FS)
Chapter 14-97, F.A.C.
Chapter 14-96, F.A.C.

REFERENCES:

Median Handbook (Systems Planning Office)
Plans Preparation Manual (Topic No. 625-000-005 Section 1.8)
PD&E Manual (Chapters 8 and 9)

1. PRINCIPLES OF MEDIAN REVIEW

There are three essential principles that should be used when considering deviations from median opening and signal spacing standards:

- C Traffic safety,
- C Traffic efficiency, and
- C Highway functional integrity

- 1.1** Safety of the total transportation system is paramount and should not be compromised. The traffic efficiency and highway function of each road on the State Highway System are also important and will be given various levels of priority depending on highway classification according to **14-97.003(2)(b)**.

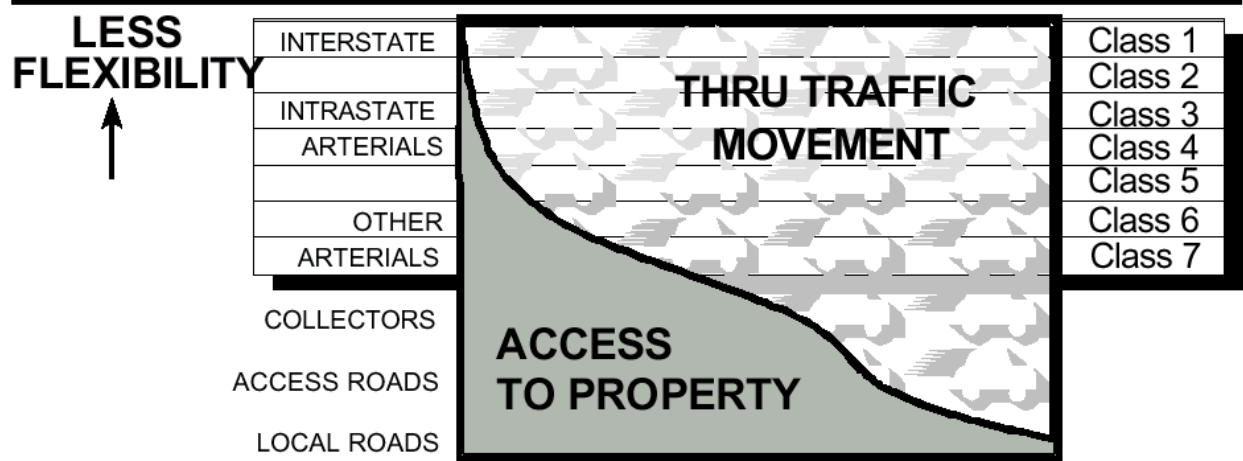
It is also important to look at more than just the physical or engineering impacts of these decisions. We should include a “big picture” look at the decision. In many cases this will involve working closely with the appropriate local government and community groups. Other impacts that are also important are: impacts to neighborhood traffic, impacts to businesses, and community impacts to those communities near roadways where our decisions have been implemented.

- 1.2** When a freeway has an interchange with an at-grade arterial, the operations of the freeway and the interchange ramps will take precedence over the access issues of the lower classed (less access restricted) facilities in the interchange area.

- 1.3** Deviations from the standards relating to median placement should show an overriding benefit in safety or traffic operations or be shown not to degrade traffic safety, traffic efficiency, or highway functional integrity.

- 1.4** The higher the access management class (as defined in **Chapter 14-97.003, F.A.C.**) the fewer deviations from standards should be allowed.

NOTE: On occasion even roads in lower access classifications may need to be treated in a more “strict” sense due to special safety concerns of the corridor (such as high speed, high volume, and high left turn demand).



HIGHWAY HIERARCHY

- 1.5** The Florida Intrastate Highway System (FIHS) shall have the strictest adherence to the Access Management Standards. This strict adherence is due to the fact that the FIHS is instituted to,

... provide a statewide transportation network that allows for high-speed and high-volume traffic movements within the state. The primary function of the system is to provide such traffic movements. Access to abutting land is subordinate to this function, and such access must be prohibited or highly regulated. 338.001(1) F.S.

On the FIHS, issues of traffic efficiency will play a more important role than for other roads on the State Highway System.

- 1.6** Deviations from the standards shall be made under the direct supervision of a Department Professional Engineer knowledgeable in access management and traffic operations.
- 1.7** This process will also be used in the reevaluation of all median opening locations in road designs not yet constructed that do not meet the standards in Administrative Rule 14-97 or require additional public involvement.

2. MEDIAN AND DRIVEWAY DECISIONS IN DEPARTMENT IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

2.1 GENERAL PROVISIONS

- 2.1.1** Existing Features - Existing medians, median openings, driveways, traffic signals and adjacent highway features will play a role in the decision on median opening location. As stated in **Rule Chapter 14-97.003(1)(b)**

Permitted connections and those unpermitted connections exempted pursuant to Section 335.187(1)(grand fathered), Florida Statutes, existing median openings, and signals are not required to meet the interim standards or the standards of the assigned classification. Such features will generally be allowed to remain in place. These features shall be brought into reasonable conformance with the standards of the assigned classification or their interim standards where new connection permits are granted for significant changes in property uses or as changes to the roadway design allow.

- 2.1.2** Median opening analysis consisting of decisions to close, relocate or modify existing median opening locations will be done on all projects.
- 2.1.3** On major improvement projects, median opening analysis will be done as early as possible but no later than 30% plans.
- 2.1.4** Minor Public Street Intersections - Median openings are not automatically provided where existing public streets intersect the State Highway System. Median openings at these locations will be analyzed the same as all potential median opening locations.
- 2.1.5** The more extensive a transportation improvement project, the more strict the Department will be in the implementation of the standards. An example would be greater effort to attain the median opening standards on a project that adds through lanes rather than a resurfacing project.
- 2.1.6** The removal of large portions of restrictive medians is prohibited unless the highway will be made significantly safer or if the highway would experience a significantly higher level of operations without degrading safety. This decision shall be documented in a traffic study signed and sealed by a professional engineer.

2.2 RESURFACING AND SAFETY PROJECT CONSIDERATIONS

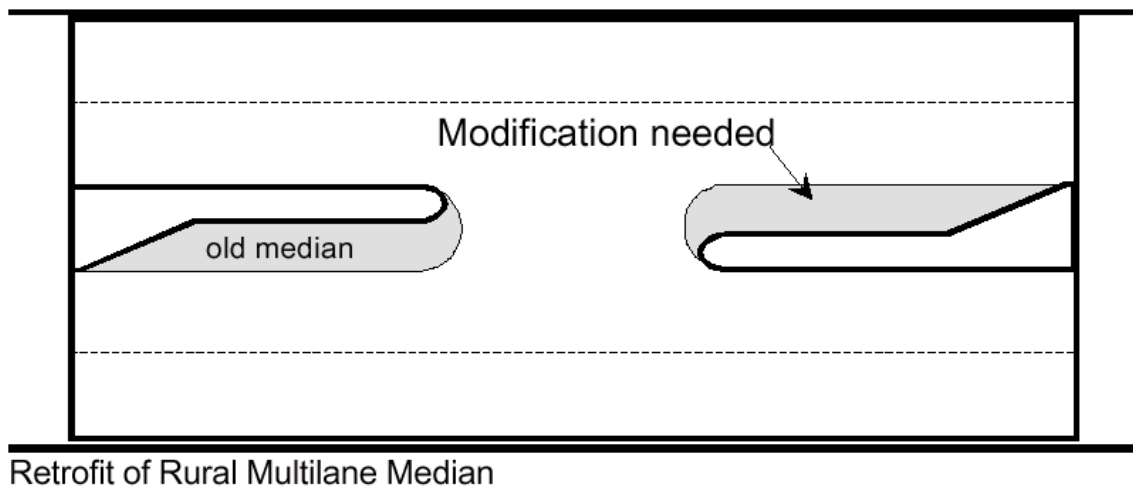
2.2.1 The extent to which efforts are made to bring a roadway into greater conformance to the standards on a resurfacing project would depend on the circumstances of the project. These circumstances might include:

- C Existing traffic problems
- C Potential traffic problems
- C Life of the project
- C Crash experience
- C Desired function of the road

2.2.2 Technical justification (safety and/or operational) and public involvement are just as important during a resurfacing project as they are in a major construction project. Involving the public in the reasoning behind decisions will remain a priority.

2.3 MEDIAN RETROFIT CONSIDERATIONS

2.3.1 Rural multi-lane highways, located in urban, suburban, or soon to be suburbanized locations with primarily "bullet-nose" median opening design, should be redesigned to either have left turn storage, be closed, or be signed or designed for turn prohibitions.



2.3.2 Existing seven lane sections will be given the highest priority for retrofit for restrictive medians.

- 2.3.3** Existing five lane sections exceeding 28,000 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) a higher or those with than usual crash rate will be given a high priority for retrofit consideration.

3. CONSIDERATIONS FOR REVIEW OF DEVIATIONS FROM THE MEDIAN OPENING STANDARDS:

- 3.1** Approval of deviations shall be in harmony with the purpose and intent of the ***Access Management Act (335.18 F.S.)*** and ***(Rule 14-97, F.A.C.)*** protecting public safety, providing mobility, and preserving the functional integrity of the State Highway System.
- 3.2** Deviations shall not be considered until the feasible options for meeting access management standards are explored.
- 3.3** Requests for deviation from median opening standards must:
- (A) provide documentation of unique or special conditions based upon established engineering principles that make strict application of the spacing standards impractical or unsafe; and
 - (B) provide documentation how the deviation would affect the traffic efficiency and safety of the transportation facility; and
 - (C) be signed and sealed by a Professional Engineer knowledgeable in traffic engineering; or
 - (D) be clearly beneficial or justifiable to the District Access Management Review Committee.

NOTE: These requirements should not prevent any person from speaking directly to the Review Committee about their concerns.

- 3.4** A deviation shall not be considered under any of the following conditions:

The geometrics preclude design as stated in the current ***Roadway and***

Traffic Design Standards (also known as the "Standard Index") and the ***Plans Preparation Manual***;

From Standard Index #301					
Design Speed* MPH		Entry Speed		Total Decel Distance "L"	
35		25		145 ft.	
45		35		185 ft.	
50 Urban		40		240 ft.	
50 Rural		44		320 ft.	
55 Rural		48		385 ft.	

* Sometimes it may be appropriate to use the off-peak speed (average, assumed or 85th percentile) for this speed.

- C Sight distances for the proposed traffic movements would jeopardize safety;
- C Where the provision of the median opening would cause any safety hazard, such as queuing on railroad tracks, school pedestrian crossings, freeway ramps or the functional area of the intersection;
- C The hardship is self-created by the landowner or business;
- C Any other deviation that would negatively impact safety;
- C The deviation would degrade the efficiency of the system.
- C

3.5 Recommended Queue Storage Length

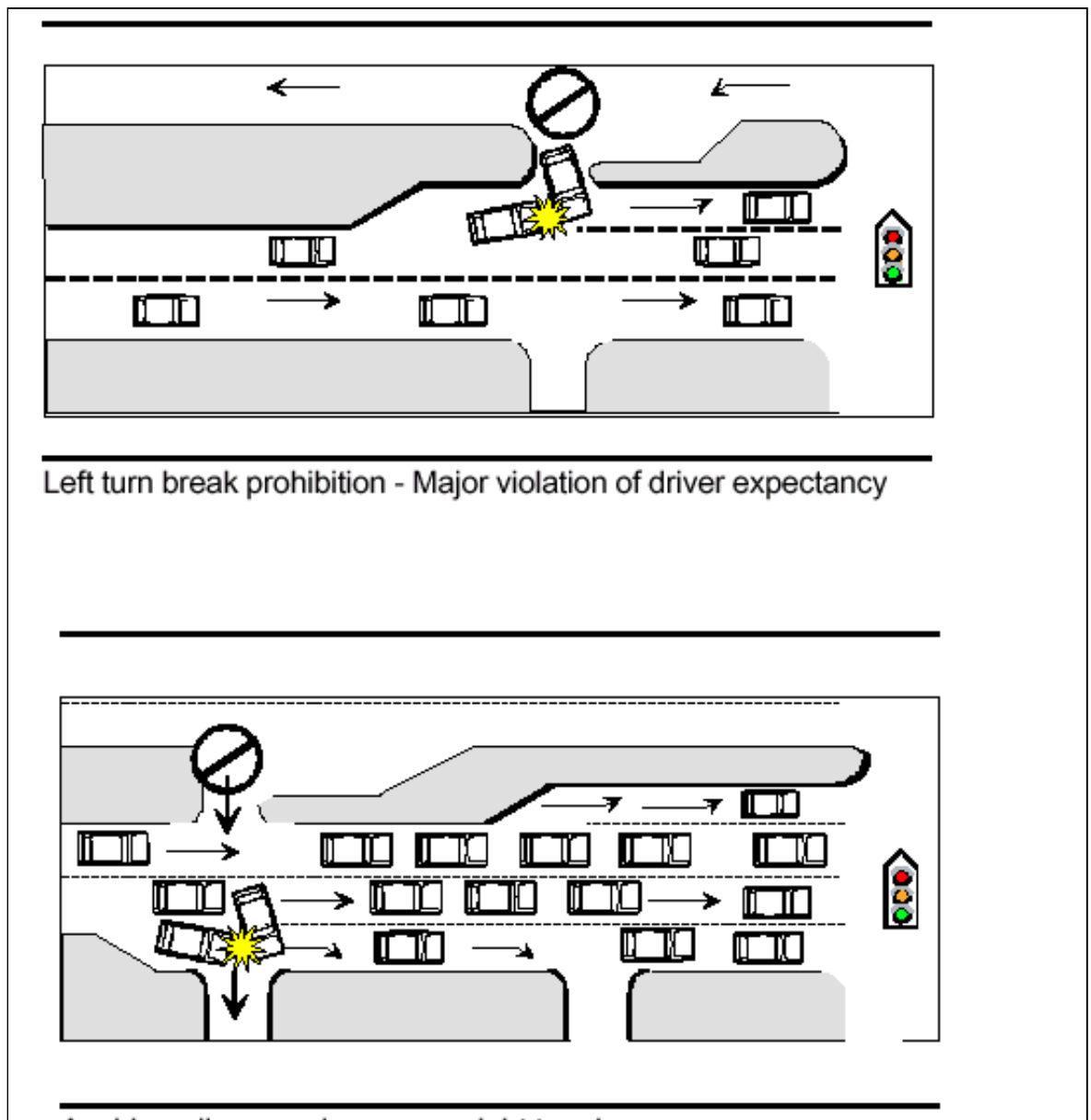
Site or project specific projections of queue storage should be used at all major or critical intersections. (Due to the variable nature of left turn demand, actual turn volumes should be reviewed in many cases. Designs should also be conservative enough to handle some of the uncertainty in demand.)

Where left turn volumes are unknown, and expected to be minor:

Urban/suburban minimum = 4 cars or 100 ft (30 m)
Rural/small town minimum = 2 cars or 50 ft (15 m)

NOTE: Even small towns have major generators and streets with high turning volumes. The 2 car or 50 ft (15 m) minimum queue would not be appropriate there.

- (a) Median openings that allow traffic across left turn lanes shall not be allowed.



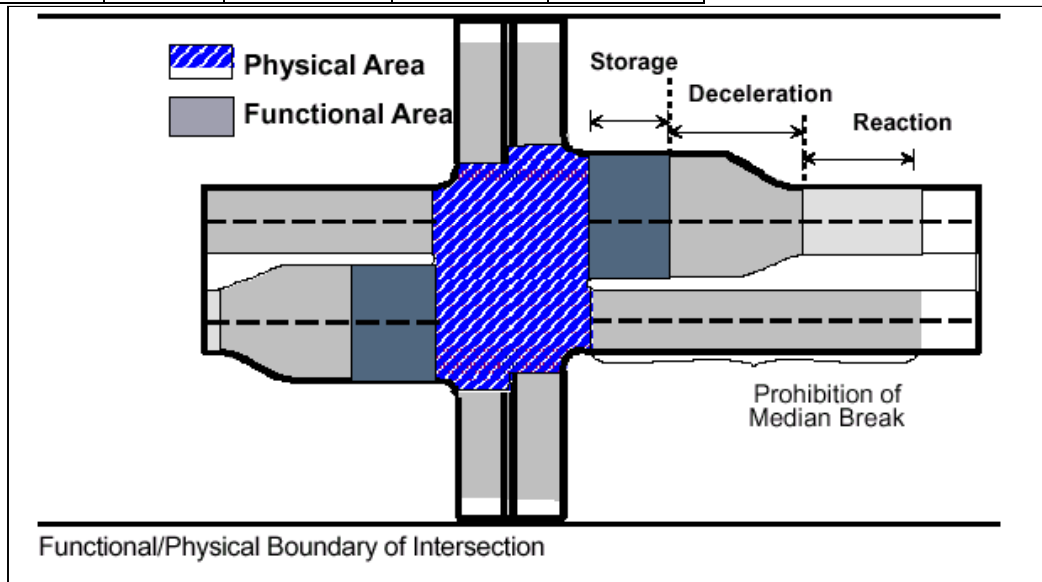
3.7 Median openings that allow the following movements should be avoided:

Across exclusive right turn lanes

Across regularly forming queues from neighboring intersections

- 3.8** Median openings shall not be located in the functional area of a signalized intersection. The functional area consists of distance traveled during perception reaction time, plus deceleration distance, plus queue storage. Reaction time may be used as follows:

Areas	Sec.	35 mph	45 mph	55 mph
Rural	2.5	130 ft	165 ft	200 ft
Suburban	2	100 ft	130 ft	160 ft
Urban	1.5	75 ft	100 ft	120 ft



- 3.9** A complete analysis of the proposed deviation should include the following:
- C Alternatives to safely reroute traffic including "U" turns
 - C Adequacy of maneuvering distances
 - C Gap availability in the opposing traffic stream
 - C Adopted plans to change the roadway design including adopted long range plans or classification
 - C Ability to accommodate future growth and increasing traffic volumes

NOTE: In some cases, where traffic growth is expected to be very slow, short term traffic projections (to 5 years) may be a consideration in the analysis.

- C The potential for either relieving or increasing "cut through" traffic or through established residential areas
- C Ability to maintain traffic progression during peak and off-peak periods (cycle length, speed, and band width)
- C Pedestrian safety

3.10 Conditions that may be viewed favorably in evaluating a proposed median opening deviation include:

Opportunities to alleviate significant traffic congestion at existing or planned signalized intersections,

Opportunities to accommodate a joint access serving two or more traffic generators

Existence of un-relocateable control points such as bridges, waterways, parks, historic or archaeological areas, cemeteries, and unique natural features.

Where strict application of the median opening standards in **14-97.003(1) Figure 2**, would result in a safety, maneuvering, or traffic operational problem

Where directional openings would replace existing full service median opening

3.11 A heightened level of scrutiny and justification should be performed on deviation requests for:

- (A) Florida Intrastate Highway System facilities
- (B) Access Class 2 or 3
- (C) Full median openings and signal spacing
- (D) Median openings in a high accident corridor or location, unless a

safety benefit can be clearly shown

- (E) Situations where circulation can be provided through other alternatives

4. MINOR DEVIATIONS FOR MEDIAN OPENINGS

Minor deviations are those that are 10% or less than the current spacing standards in **14-97.003(1) Figure 2**, for signals and full median openings.

- 4.1** Minor deviations need not be reviewed by the Access Management Review Committee. Such deviations are those under the 10% threshold and are of such inconsequential nature that the proposed median opening placement substantially complies with the purpose and intent of the median opening standards found in **Administrative Rule 14-97**. Authority to approve minor deviations shall be by a registered Professional Engineer as specified by the District.

- 4.2** A District may decide to have the Access Management Review Committee review even minor deviations.

NOTE: The 10% deviation figure is a customary figure for measuring significance and does not necessarily replace an appropriate safety analysis.

- 4.3** Deviations for directional median openings will not be subject to the 10% deviation threshold (it can be greater than 10%) and the decision will be based upon safety, geometric, and highway function concerns. These deviations will also be approved by a Professional Engineer.

5. CENTRAL OFFICE RESPONSIBILITY IN ACCESS MANAGEMENT AND MEDIAN OPENING DECISIONS:

- 5.1** Regular meetings (at least twice a year) will be coordinated by Central Office Planning staff. The purpose of these meetings will be to provide a forum for all District staff analyzing median opening and access management decisions.

- 5.2** Central Office Planning Staff will also coordinate efforts with other Central Office Staff involved in Access Management (such as Environmental

Management, Design, Construction, and Maintenance).

- 5.3** Central Office Planning will coordinate the development of analytical tools to help District Offices with consistent evaluation of proposed deviations from the access management standards.

6. PRINCIPLES OF WORKING WITH THE PUBLIC ON ACCESSIBILITY CONCERNS

The basic principles for working with the public on accessibility concerns are:

- 6.1** The review process involving a multi-discipline department team (called the Access Management Review Committee) in each district will guide the department's actions in access management and median decisions through all the department's processes.

- 6.1.1** When an accessibility change is proposed, the Department, to the best of its ability, will advise the impacted people and attempt to resolve the issues. The Department Staff will also advise them of the access management review process and the ability to work with the District Access Management Review Team to resolve outstanding differences. The most appropriate employees to inform people are usually those most closely related to the phase of work being considered.

- 6.1.2** At a minimum, the following issues must go to the Access Management Review Committee.

C Accessibility, driveway, and median opening issues not resolved in the District's Preliminary Review Process (see Section 6.3).

C Full movement median openings not meeting the spacing standards in **Rule 14-97** by a threshold of 10% or more.

6.2 NOTIFICATION OF INTERESTED PARTIES IS CRITICAL

- 6.2.1** Any time there is an access change proposed, regardless of when the change is proposed in the process, the property owners and occupants in the affected area will be notified in a clear and easy to understand fashion.

- 6.2.2** The goal of this process is to inform and involve the public in any design

decisions or roadway changes (including resurfacing) that the public may feel substantially affects them whenever they occur. Affected parties are not always narrowly defined property owners within 300 feet of the centerline. Sometimes they may include business operators, renters, neighbors from the

surrounding areas, or the driving public.

- 6.2.3** Generally, changes affecting less than 30 parties may be handled by smaller informal meetings, personal visits, telephone conversations or a combination of these.
- 6.2.4** The more individually a change might be felt the more individual the notification and contacts will be. For example, if a change is being proposed to a median opening during Design, the affected people and businesses will be contacted by an individual letter and a meeting will be proposed to air opinions and work together for the best options for safety and accessibility.
- 6.2.5** The process throughout the state will be consistent so that anyone with experience in one district will recognize the process and feel comfortable working in any other district.

6.3 PRELIMINARY REVIEWS

Preliminary Reviews will be available, and highly encouraged, for all interested parties to work on and resolve issues, if possible. The results of all Preliminary Reviews will be available, if requested in writing, within two working days of the review.

- 6.3.1** The District Secretary will appoint a committee in each district that will hear and consider concerns for access management and median opening decisions.
- 6.3.2** Each District will establish a fixed meeting schedule to accommodate customer requests for meeting with the Committee.
- 6.3.3** Each District will designate a contact person for the Committee. The contact person will be responsible for scheduling agenda items and making this information available to the public.
- 6.3.4** The Committee contact person will be listed in the public telephone directory as Access Management Review Committee.
- 6.3.5** Each party who makes contact with, or is contacted by the department relative to access will be informed of the District's contact person and the decision process. This should be in the form of handouts when personal or mail contact is made.

- 6.3.6** All persons seeking a review by the Access Management Review Committee will have the Committee's decision explained in writing at the end of the meeting.
- 6.3.7** Members of the Access Management Review Committees will be at least a department head level position (such as, but not limited to, District Design Engineer, District Planning Manager, District Maintenance Engineer, or District Traffic Operations Engineer) to ensure the appropriate authority to resolve issues.
- 6.3.8** **Decisions involving the Florida Intrastate Highway System should include the involvement of the appropriate staff person in the District Planning Office**
- 6.4** **Quality Assurance involving "customers" will be instituted.**
- 6.4.1** Central Office Planning and Design staff will assure that the process to make access management and median opening decisions is consistent and timely statewide through quality assurance reviews.
- 6.4.2** Customer surveys will give us an indication of how we are serving our customers. See ***Section 7, Procedure for Record Keeping and Reporting***, of this procedure (See Attached sample of Customer Survey). Customer surveys will be made available to all persons using this process.
- 6.4.3** Central Office Systems Planning will coordinate the review of a sample of the engineering decisions to assist in providing guidance on the best practices and to assure consistency.
- 6.5** **There will be customer participation at all levels of the access management review process.** Even though parties requesting deviations will not always get what they want, they will always have an opportunity to meet face-to-face with the appropriate Department staff. They will be given an opportunity to express their concerns and suggest solutions to their concerns.
- 6.6** The Department will take an active role in facilitating cooperation and resolving access management and median opening issues by identifying solutions such as:
- Joint access for shared median openings or driveways

- Cross access agreements for shared access
- Median locations to serve multiple parcels (even if not direct)

6.7 The Department will show flexibility and creativity in resolving access management and median opening location issues.

6.7.1 The Department will be proactive in suggesting the most accommodating land access consistent with safety and efficient operations of our roadways.

6.7.2 The Department will be proactive in bringing about joint access, cross access, and joint access to medians.

6.7.3 The Department will attempt, through design and joint access features, to serve the interests of all road users and affected parties.

6.7.4 If a feature is suggested that does not meet the access management or median opening spacing standards, and the Department's Access Management Review Committee determines that the feature, given the expected traffic volumes, can operate without a degradation in safety or operations, they may allow the feature. A written agreement with the interested parties will be reached on certain conditions (such as increased traffic or accidents) for which the feature will be changed or closed.

6.8 Early identification of access and median opening location in relation to individual parcels should be completed before appraisal.

6.8.1 Any significant change to driveway access will be shown in plans or the driveway will be replaced in the same location, width and configuration.

6.8.2 Access design and impacts to a right-of-way acquisition parcel should be determined prior to appraisal.

6.8.3 Changes to access details or decisions must be coordinated with District Right of Way and General Counsel's offices in addition to the Access Management Review Committee.

7. PROCEDURE FOR RECORD KEEPING AND REPORTING

7.1 Customer Survey Forms (see sample Attachment) will be available to all people who appear before the Access Management Review or Preliminary Review Committees. This information will be used in the evaluation of the process. The survey forms may change as needs require and approved by a

Central Office, Systems Planning representative.

- 7.2** If requested by a representative in the Central Office Systems Planning Section, a representative for the Access Management Review Committee District will compile a report on the activities and decisions of the Access Management Review Committee. This report will be sent to the Central Office, Systems Planning Office contact by the end of the following month (example: January, February and March will be available by the end of April). The report will be in a format agreed to by the Central Office and District representatives of the Access Management Review Teams.

8. QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEWS OF THE PROCESS

- 8.1** Central Office Planning and Design staff will review the process in districts to determine compliance with this procedure. This will include review of the reports included above along with interviews with district staff involved in the process.
- 8.2** Periodically, input will also be requested from developers, attorneys, and others who have been involved in the process for their comments, concerns, and suggestions.
- 8.3** The process will be modified as necessary to meet the intended objectives of the Department.

9. TRAINING AND ASSISTANCE FROM CENTRAL OFFICE

The following training or guidebooks are available from the appropriate office:

Systems Planning Office

- C Training on this procedure (half day)
- C **Median Handbook** - also available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/Planning>
- C **Median Handbook training** (one half to one day - depending on need)
- C **A Public Involvement Handbook for Median Projects**
- C **Public Involvement in Access Management** (slide show)
- C **Policy Planning**
- C **Advanced Public Involvement Workshop** (4 days)
- C **Overview of Public Involvement** (half day to one day, depending on the need)

- Environmental Management Office**
- C **Community Impacts Assessment** - booklet from USDOT/FHWA
- C **Community Impact Mitigation** - booklet from USDOT/FHWA
- C **Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision Making** -
published by USDOT/FHWA/FTA

10. FORMS

None

**SAMPLE
ACCESS MANAGEMENT REVIEW CUSTOMER SURVEY**

DATE:

NAME:

I agree that the Access Management Review Committee review was fair.

"	"	"	"	"
0%	25%	50%	75%	100%

I agree that the terms and conditions are easily understood.

"	"	"	"	"
0%	25%	50%	75%	100%

I agree that I have been treated with courtesy by Department staff in my pursuit of this issue.

"	"	"	"	"
0%	25%	50%	75%	100%

I agree that I got what I asked for from the Access Management Review Committee.

"	"	"	"	"
0%	25%	50%	75%	100%

I agree that the time for my Review was sufficient.

"	"	"	"	"
0%	25%	50%	75%	100%

I suggest revising the Review Process as follows: